

services to unemployed and underemployed women—to help them get decent jobs with a living wage.

This nonprofit organization provides an extremely valuable service to corporations and managers who are trying to develop and support successful skills-development strategies for African-American women. Working in partnership with executives, BCW has helped improve the lives of countless women from corporate executives to entrepreneurs.

Over the last two decades, more than 10,000 women have benefited from the service of Black Career Women.

Black Career Women has been helping the African-American women in the Cincinnati area and throughout the Nation achieve the goals of self-help and self-determination. They deserve the praise of all people who believe in diversity, economic progress, and independence for working people.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in extending our warmest congratulations on their 20th anniversary. They are making a big difference for the better in the life of the Cincinnati area and the entire nation.●

RECOGNITION OF HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

● Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I am proud to be able to speak today, as many of my colleagues have done recently, on the significance of Hispanic Heritage Month, being commemorated from September 15 through October 15. For almost 30 years, we as a nation have, in this way, formally acknowledged and celebrated the contributions Hispanic Americans have made and are making to our country.

Mr. President, in my home State of Texas, Hispanics are an intrinsic and dynamic part of our history, culture, economy, and civic life. From El Paso to Texarkana, and from Amarillo to Brownsville, over 6 million Latinos in Texas contribute immeasurably to making the Lone Star State the unique and wonderful place it is. Whether they trace their ancestry to the earliest Spanish settlers in Texas or have recently immigrated to this country, individually and collectively Hispanics have made our State and our Nation a richer place in which to live.

For at least 250 of the last 400 years, Hispanic heritage was synonymous with Texas heritage. Since the first Spanish landing at the mouth of the Rio Grande by Alonso Alvarez de Pineda in 1519, the Spanish, and later the Mexicans bravely began to colonize the vast and rugged land known as Texas. To this day, Hispanics continue to contribute their boundless determination and unique perspective to every facet of life in Texas and the Nation. Hispanic Americans enrich our lives in virtually every field of endeavor: politics, business, science, education, art, music, film, cuisine, and countless other fields.

In my home State, we recently lost two of our greatest native Texas His-

panics, Congressman Frank Tejeda and musical artist Selena Perez. In their own way, both of these individuals demonstrated astonishing determination, which in turn reflected the vibrancy and strength of the Hispanic community: Frank Tejeda, who dropped out of high school from the south side of San Antonio and went on to distinguish himself in military service in Vietnam, in higher education, in the business world, and as a dedicated public servant; and Selena who, at the young age of 23 became a pop icon, entertaining audiences in her hometown of Corpus Christi and throughout the world with her unique brand of "Tejano" music. Although the lives of these two great Texans ended far too soon, they will forever inspire the tens of thousands of young Hispanics who will look to them and to the many other Hispanic leaders in our country as symbols of what can be achieved through hard work, ambition, and the support of the community.

As a Texas and as a member of the Senate Republican Conference Task Force on Hispanic Affairs, I remain committed to ensuring that the American dream continues to exist and to come true for all Americans. Through my activities on this task force and in the Senate, as well as through daily contact with my constituents, I have worked hard to ensure that the needs and concerns of the Hispanic community are heard and responded to. While we all share the goal of improving our country and the opportunities for our children, there are economic and other concerns that disproportionately impact the Hispanic community. I believe we in Congress must continue to address those concerns by pursuing policies that promote education, health care, urban renewal, and a business environment that encourages entrepreneurial activity and risk taking.

There are certainly challenges ahead. With so many Hispanic-owned businesses starting up around the country, access to capital is a critical need. I have supported and continue to support lending and contracting programs that offer fledgling businesses the opportunity to launch themselves—and to continue to soar. I am also working to give small business people and other Americans relief from excessive levels of taxation and Federal regulation.

On the eve of a new millennium, it is vital that we remain a people united, respectful of the individual, the family, and our country as a whole. In this same spirit, it is also important to inform ourselves and our children of the sacrifices and contributions that have been made by our ancestors on our behalf. Hispanics have extremely good reason to be proud of that heritage and to rejoice in it.

Mr. President, I am pleased to be able to highlight today the contribution of Hispanics to the exquisite mosaic that is America the Beautiful, America la linda.●

PROTECTING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WORLDWIDE

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to draw the attention of my colleagues to an article I recently read on the subject of religious freedom. The author, Mr. Philip Peters, a senior fellow at the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution, offers a keen assessment of the tragedy that currently faces Christians who are being persecuted in their homelands. In his article, "Persecution and Redemption," Mr. Peters makes specific reference to the treatment of Christians and other victims of religious persecution living in the former Soviet Union.

It is unfortunate but true that tens of thousands of people in the former Soviet Union cannot practice their religion without encountering hostility from their government. As the author points out, "About one fourth of Russia's regional governments have laws restricting religious activity."

I agree with Mr. Peters' assessment that refugees from the former Soviet Union "deserve the support of anyone concerned about Christians and other victims of religious persecution around the world." I have joined with Senators KENNEDY, HATCH, and LEAHY in urging President Clinton to restore the refugee ceiling on refugees from the former Soviet Union in fiscal year 1998 to its level in fiscal year 1997.

Mr. President, I ask that Mr. Peters' article be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From the Washington Times, Sept. 25, 1997]

PERSECUTION AND REDEMPTION

(By Philip Peters)

This year, Washington has caught on to a fact that human rights activists have known for some time: Persecution of Christians is on the rise around the world. This issue was at the center of the debate on China's trade status, and the State Department issued a special report on it in July.

Now, the question is whether anything will be done about it.

New legislation introduced by Sen. Arlen Specter and Rep. Frank Wolf, the Freedom From Religious Persecution Act, is so laden with new economic sanctions and foreign policy prescriptions that it has drawn the opposition of the Clinton administration, business, and pro-trade groups, and is destined for prolonged debate.

While that debate goes on, four other senators have proposed a far more immediate and concrete way for the U.S. to help.

On Sept. 10, Sens. Spencer Abraham, Edward Kennedy, Orrin Hatch, and Patrick Leahy called on the administration to abandon its current plan to cut next year's admissions of refugees from the former Soviet Union. They deserve the support of anyone concerned about Christians and other victims of religious persecution around the world.

The State Department wants to cut admissions from the former Soviet Union to 21,000, even though 27,000 were admitted this year. The senators propose instead 30,000 admissions from the former Soviet Union, with no reductions in planned admissions from other regions.

This proposal is modest. The Clinton administration has driven refugee admissions down 40 percent, and if the senators' proposal is accepted, total 1998 admissions